Met Office

NEWS

Don't put yourself in weather danger: check out our updated regional mountain forecasts

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Half of people across the UK (49%) now consider themselves 'outdoor enthusiasts' according to new research released today by the Met Office.

However, many are still getting caught out by the weather, leading to potentially dangerous situations.

In total, 58% of people in the UK have been 'caught out' by the weather whilst taking part in an outdoor activity – for example, 26% have been soaked due to not having waterproof clothing, whilst 12% have become dangerously cold due to a lack of warm clothing. One in ten (9%) have fallen over due to not wearing suitable footwear whilst an unlucky 2% have been forced to spend a night out in the open due to being unable to get back to a safe location or their home.

However, for many the situation was even more serious. Amongst those who consider themselves 'outdoor enthusiasts', a third (31%) say they have found themselves in a 'dangerous or perilous' situation due to not planning for the weather, which equates to around eight million people across the UK (15% of adults). The figure is perhaps less surprising when it is considered that just 20% say that 'checking the weather' is their top priority before heading out to participate in an outdoor activity.

When asked about their approach to checking the weather, a savvy 38% of outdoor enthusiasts use a weather forecast which is specifically tailored to the activity they are taking part in. This is all-important when taking part in any activity in hilly or mountainous regions – as weather conditions can vary dramatically at different altitudes. For example, temperatures can drop by several degrees Celsius with just a 100m rise in elevation.

Indeed, when asked to consider how they would feel if they had to be rescued from a mountainous or rural area due to getting into difficultly, 71% said they would feel 'embarrassed and guilty'.

Richard Orrell is the Deputy Head of the Public Weather Service at the Met Office. He said: "It is clear from our research that too many outdoor enthusiasts suffer needlessly because of a lack of preparation. For those who venture into our upland landscapes the risks and consequences of being unprepared for potentially life-threatening situations can be extremely severe."

Major improvements to Mountain Region Forecasts

To help with planning of mountain-based activity and support public safety, the Met Office has been working on major improvements to its Mountain Region Forecasts, which cover a wide range of high altitude areas across Great Britain including: most of the high ground in Scotland north of the central belt; The Lake District; The Yorkshire Dales; The Peak District; Snowdonia; and The Brecon Beacons. The improvements have just been rolled out ahead of the summer walking season.

The Mountain Forecasts provide area-specific risks of weather hazards and forecasts for weather conditions in three-hourly periods including: wind speed and direction; temperature; the probability of rain or snow; visibility levels; and whether cloud is expected to cover hill tops – to help outdoor enthusiasts prepare routes, clothing and equipment.

Shaun Roberts, Principal at Scotland's National Outdoor Training Centre, said: "Detailed mountain weather forecasting is an integral and critical part of our daily planning. We are delighted that the SportScotland Mountain Weather research in 2015 has helped influence commitment and developments into public mountain weather service provision and welcome the investment that the Met office has made to support those heading into our hills and mountains."

Richard Orrell added: "Mountain weather can change very quickly. Good weather can rapidly turn severe when altitude is added to the mix, so being prepared is essential.

"Our new and improved Mountain Forecast is compiled by specially-trained meteorologists who often spend time in the hills and mountains and know the ins and outs of mountain weather. This helps them to provide accurate altitude forecasts. No one knows Britain's weather like the Met Office – so our forecasts are the ones to trust when it really matters."

The Mountain Forecast can be viewed here.

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